MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

NOAA
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
HABITAT CONSERVATION DIVISION

August 2006

This issue of the HCD Monthly Highlights is dedicated to our dear friend and colleague, Anita Riportella.

Sadly, Anita Riportella, a respected colleague in the Northeast Region Habitat Conservation Division, passed away on Friday, August 4, 2006. She succumbed to complications while undergoing chemo and radiation therapy for cancer.

Anita Riportella was a Fisheries Biologist with NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service under the U.S. Department of Commerce for the last 12 years. Stationed at the James J. Howard Marine Sciences Laboratory at Sandy Hook, New Jersey, she worked through the Habitat Conservation Program to preserve, enhance, and protect the wetlands and waters needed for the survival of important fish and shellfish, especially in the states of New Jersey and Delaware.

She authored and co-authored numerous scientific papers and notes, and served on a number of interagency committees to develop solutions to complex coastal development and fisheries habitat issues. As many of us know, she approached her work with excellence and passion. Her dedication and innovative approaches to problems gained her considerable respect among her peers and colleagues. Her tireless efforts to safeguard the marine environment resulted in the protection and restoration of hundreds of acres of vital fish habitat. This is underscored most recently in awards and recognitions, such as the NOAA Bronze Medal and the Vice President Gore "Hammer Award."

She will be greatly missed, but remain in the memories of her NOAA friends and the many federal and state agency colleagues where she carried out her work.

The highlights of activities this month offered by Anita's colleagues are a fitting tribute to her professional work in protecting and conserving NOAAs' trust marine resources which she loved so much.

GLOUCESTER, MA OFFICE, ONE BLACKBURN DRIVE, GLOUCESTER, MA 01930

SANDY RIVER DAM REMOVAL DEDICATION

On Friday, August 11, Madison Electric Works, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services, NOAA Fisheries, Trout Unlimited, and the Maine Atlantic Salmon Commission held a dedication event for the Sandy River Project dam removal in Norridgewok, ME. The Sandy River Project, built in 1893, was one of Maine's first hydroelectric dams. It was also the only dam on the mainstem of the Sandy River up to the Sandy River ponds. Removing this dam opens 52 river miles of Atlantic salmon and American eel habitat in the mainstem of the river, and an additional 186 miles of habitat within the tributaries. The Atlantic salmon Commission believes the Sandy River contains up to 80% of the salmon spawning habitat in the Kennebec River Watershed. The impetus for removal came through the relicensing process. The US Fish and Wildlife Service, with support by the Maine Atlantic Salmon Commission and NOAA Fisheries, required fish passage at the project. Madison Electric Works determined that dam removal was more economical than constructing, operating, and maintaining fish passage at the Project. Madison Electric Works received support by various partners throughout the removal process. The powerhouse will remain intact due to its historical significance. **(sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9113)**

TIDEWATER ASSOCIATES SEEK PRELIMINARY PERMIT FOR HALFMOON COVE PROJECT, MAINE

On August 28, NOAA Fisheries filed comments on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued notice regarding application by Tidewater Associates (P-12704) to develop tidal energy projects in Halfmoon Cove, Cobscook Bay, Quoddy, Maine. The scope of the notice(s) is limited to preliminary planning and economic analysis only. If issued, the preliminary permit provides the applicant 36 months to investigate the viability of the site for the proposed project. The investigations usually consist of an economic analysis, engineering plans, and an assessment of environmental impacts. A preliminary permit does not authorize construction. Tidewater Associates proposed project in Halfmoon Cove would consist of a 1,210-foot-long dam with three turbines. The dam, in combination with emptying/filling gates, will be used to establish a hydroelectric head in a manner similar to most conventional hydroelectric dams. The project is estimated to have a total generation capacity of 13.5 megawatts, which would be sold to a local utility. The project has the potential to impact trust resources of NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). NMFS anticipates that the Commission and/or any other federal permitting agency, such as the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), will need to perform an analysis of environmental impacts under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) should the project's scope progress. FERC notices and public comments filed for these projects can be found on the FERC e-Library at www.ferc.gov. **(sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9113)**

ORPC MAINE, LLC AND PASSAMAQUODDY TRIBE PROPOSE TIDAL ENERGY PROJECTS, MAINE

On August 28, NOAA Fisheries filed comments on FERC issued notice regarding applications by ORPC Maine, LLC and the Passamaquoddy Tribe to develop tidal energy projects in the Western Passage and Cobscook Bay, Washington County, Maine. Similar to the Tidewater Associates preliminary permit application, the scope of the notice(s) is limited to preliminary planning and economic analysis only. If issued, the preliminary permit provides the applicant time to investigate the viability of the site for the proposed project, usually consisting of an economic analysis, engineering plans, and an assessment of environmental impacts. A preliminary permit does not authorize construction. Unlike the Halfmoon Cove project, the ORPC Maine, LLC and the Passamaquoddy Tribe projects do not include dams. They would consist of 80 – 150 "tidal in stream energy conversion" devises with rotating propeller blades, much like a windmill underwater, with outputs of 29 to 54 gigawatt-hours. Similar to all the tidal projects proposed, the final project has the potential to impact NMFS' trust resources. Accordingly, NMFS anticipates that the Commission and/or any other federal permitting agency will need to perform an analysis of environmental impacts under NEPA should the project's scope progress. Further, the

Commission will need to consult with NMFS before authorizing installation in the involved waterway, even if the installation is limited to data collection devices or a small scale experimental pilot study. Because the proposed locations of these projects overlap, the Commission considered the permits as competing. As such, a preliminary permit, if issued by the Commission, will be granted to either ORPC Maine, LLC or the Passamaquoddy Tribe. FERC notices and public comments filed for these projects can be found on the FERC e-Library at www.ferc.gov. **(sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9113)**

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FISH IMPACT ISSUES REVIEWED AT CONNECTICUT POWER PLANT

Millstone Point Nuclear Power Station is one of a group of once-through cooling system, power generation facilities that poses significant adverse impacts from both impingement and entrainment. In their recently finalized documentation for the re-licensing of Units #2 and #3, FERC noted this situation and reported its occurrence with a number of species, especially the winter flounder. It is their early life stages that are receiving the highest levels of these operations-related, adverse impacts. The activities leading up to the possible re-issuance of the Millstone Point NPDES by the State of Connecticut has awoken the need to re-visit and assess the "value" of alternative cooling water extraction systems. In that regard, we are fortunate to have a comprehensive assessment of some screening systems that was drafted by Ms. Anita Riportella of the HCD staff at our Sandy Hook Office. The work was initiated by Anita when she was faced with a situation similar to that at Millstone Point and needed information on screening techniques that could be used to lower or eliminate impingement and entrainment impacts associated with large water volume extractions. Because cooling water is deemed a non-consumptive water use, NMFS is constantly striving to eliminate or reduce impingement and entrainment impacts on aquatic resources. Anita's effort continues to facilitate obtaining those objectives. She is missed. **(Michael.Ludwig@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)**

TIDAL ENERGY PILOT PROPOSED IN DELAWARE'S INDIAN RIVER INLET

Milford Field Office staff recently undertook review of an application by Underwater Electric Kite® Corporation (UEK) to place and operate an experimental, subaqueous turbine assembly in Indian River Inlet near Delaware Seashore State Park, Indian River Hundred, Sussex County, Delaware. The contemplated Phase I pilot project entails deployment of a 14-foot-long by 10-foot-tall turbine that is installed 45 feet off the south side of Indian River Inlet and 495 feet west of the inlet mouth. Since the turbines are designed to float more or less in the middle of the water column, they would be secured in position by two 60-foot-long mooring cables to a 20-foot-long skid and benthic anchoring system. The project proponents also plan a larger scale pilot under the current present notice; however, it is important to note that their ultimate goal is to install a commercial scale build capable of generating 10 MW of electricity. A conceptual summary of this latter concept is available at UEK's corporate website http://uekus.com/iri.html. Since Indian River Inlet is the sole hydrological connection between the Atlantic Ocean and Delaware's productive Inland Bays estuary, and the potential impacts of UEK's turbine units on aquatic resources remain untested, a number of issues remain to be negotiated. This project was the last one undertaken by our colleague Anita Riportella before her sudden illness, and one that she was especially interested in seeing through personally. It is our sad honor to continue this work in her stead. **(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)**

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MASONVILLE DREDGE MATERIAL CONTAINMENT FACILITY

Negotiations are continuing on the Maryland Port Administration's (MPA) proposed Masonville Dredge Material Containment Facility (DMCF) in Baltimore Harbor. The Masonville DMCF, selected by MPA's Harbor Options Team and Bay Enhancement Work Group to replace the Hart Miller Island DMCF (to be closed permanently in 2009), will displace 129 acres of the tidal Patapsco River. Interagency comments were recently submitted to the Baltimore District, ACOE on a draft Tiered Environmental Impact Statement, prepared by MPA to satisfy the NEPA and Section 10/404 requirements for this project. MPA is proposing a multi-component compensatory mitigation package to off-set project-related losses of aquatic habitat. Included in this package are: 1) ecological enhancement of a tidal cove adjacent to the proposed DMCF, which will include tidal/nontidal wetland creation/restoration, benthic substrate enhancement by capping of fine-grain contaminated silts with sand, and placement of concrete "reef-balls" to diversify subtidal habitat for fish and benthos; 2) constructing three fish ladders designed for passing American eel at three dams on the nontidal Patapsco River mainstem to restore eel use to the upper reaches of this watershed; 3) restoring American shad, alewife, and blueback herring stocks in the Patapsco River watershed through a 5-year program of stocking yolk-sac fry and monitoring of adult returns; and 4) installing/maintaining of trash interceptors at several inlets to the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River to reduce flotsam levels throughout Harbor waters. All mitigation components will be supplemented with a 5-year monitoring plan to appraise success of each action.

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